



Creating a Personal History

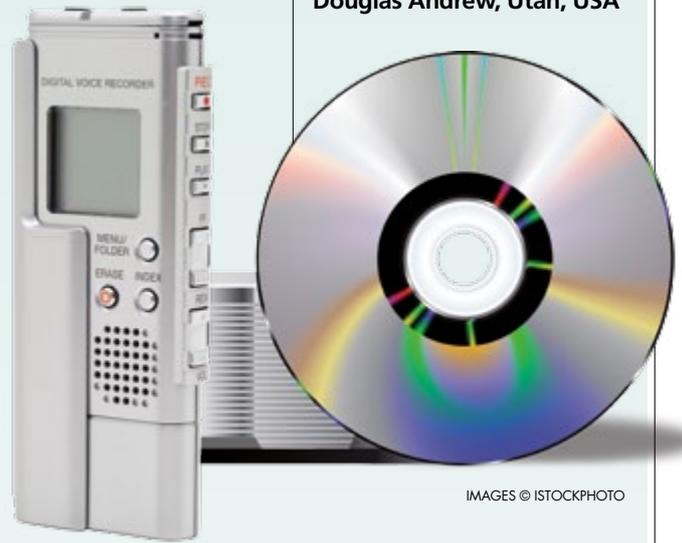
Our ward holds a monthly empty-nesters' family home evening for elderly couples, widows, and widowers in the ward. Every other month, we ask someone from the group to talk about their life for 45 minutes. We give them a list of questions beforehand to help them prepare. Here are some examples of questions we ask:

- Was there anything unusual about the time, place, or conditions in which you grew up?
- What are fond memories you have of your childhood?
- What did you study for professional training and employment?
- What are your favorite hobbies and pastimes?
- What are some fond memories of your courtship, marriage, and child-rearing years?
- Share your feelings about your Father in Heaven, Jesus Christ, and the gospel.

On the day of the family home evening, we bring a recording device to preserve the presenter's life sketch. Then we make copies of the recording for his or her

family and for the ward. This practice has become a wonderful family home evening activity and has helped those who attend feel more a part of the ward.

Douglas Andrew, Utah, USA



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HELPS FOR HOME EVENING

“Follow the Prophet,” on page 18: Summarize the article for your family. You may want to read the last section of the article, “Learning to Listen to the Prophetic Word.” Review the phrases that Elder Bennett says can help us discern the direction prophets give us. Invite family members to be attentive to the prophets' counsel in general conference next month and to listen for these phrases. Consider closing with your testimony of the blessings we receive by following the prophet.

“Have I Done Any Good in the World Today?” on page 34: Consider opening with the song “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet” (*Hymns*, no. 19). Read the article as a family or select your favorite sections beforehand to read. Ask family members what they learned about President Thomas S. Monson that they didn't know before. Hand out

sheets of paper and ask everyone to write down how they know that President Monson is the living prophet today. Invite family members who haven't gained this testimony to seek after it through sincere prayer. Close by singing “Have I Done Any Good?” (*Hymns*, no. 223).

Have I Done Any Good in the World Today?

LIFE EXPERIENCES OF PRESIDENT THOMAS S. MONSON

By Heidi S. Isenstein

I have written with my husband, then the president of the England London South Mission, when the phone rang on June 16, 2008. It was President Thomas S. Monson. He began to tell me about his father, one of the missionaries of the mission. “How is the mission? How is your family? How is life in England?” And then he paused and said, “I have been talking with Thomas. I have prayed about it, and I would like you to write my biography.”

So when I say, “I was honored and tremendously overwhelmed. He then suggested that if you started the next morning, I could be halfway done by the time we came home. We had one year left of our three-year call. President Monson smiled, “When the Lord calls, the Lord guides.” I have come to appreciate the promise.

How do you write about the life of a prophet? He begins on the left-hand but on your knees.

I recognized early that this would not be a typical biography unfolding dates, times, places and travels. It was the account of a man prepared to face the world and called of God “to guide us in these latter days.” “According to the best information, observation, discipline and common sense given divine aid.”

“The Lord has said, ‘Whosoever will own a voice or by the will of my servants, it is the same.’ (D&C 1:19) Through the Lord speak through the prophet since Thomas S. Monson’s call to the full apostleship in 1981 in Geneva, Oregon. I spent months reading the hundreds of messages President Monson has given in apostleship settings. I read biographies of all the Presidents of the Church and of many great apostles. I studied the early Church in Scotland, Sweden, and England, where President Monson’s ancestors had been, the Dispensation that so influenced his words, and I asked for it as an alternative with a 100-odd contacts (President Monson spent 20 years representing the area of the